THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

The following is the second report from the select committee appointed by the Lords' Committees, to inquire into the Progress of the Building of the Houses of Parliament, and to report to the House, and to whom leave was given to report from time to time to the House:—

"That the Committee have met, and considered the subject-matter to them referred, and examined witnesses in relation thereto; and it appears to the committee that an understanding was entered into, when the arrangement for the existing accommodation of the Houses of Parliament was determined upon, that the new House of Lords, with its necessary appurtenances, should be proceeded with more speedily than other parts of the building.

"That there is no record of any orders having been officially given, and no steps have been taken in accordance with such an understanding.

"That the Committee appointed last session, in their report to the House, recommended that the architect should so conduct his operations as to secure the occupation of the new House of Lords, with temporary fittings, at the commencement of the session of 1844; and that if he should find that more time would be required, he should report the same to the Commissioners of her Majesty's Woods and Forests, in order that such report might be communicated in due time to the House.

"That instead of the new House of Lords being covered in by Christmas last, as was stated to be practicable by Mr. Barry in his evidence last year, it is now only in course of erection.

"That Mr. Barry now states, that if great exertions are made, the House of Lords, the lobbies at each end of it, the corridors connecting the same with the front building and the libraries, the committee and other rooms belonging to the House of Lords, may be covered in before winter; and the committee having examined the building, with the clerk of the works and one of the contractors, are of opinion that the whole of these apartments may be prepared for the use of the Lords by April next.

"That the Committee do not recommend that any temporary fittings should be prepared, but that all the works connected with the buildings above mentioned should be advanced with the greatest possible speed.

"And the Committee have examined Mr. Barry with respect to the style of internal fitting and decoration, and he has distinguished those parts of the building to which he considers the more costly and elaborate style should be applied. In respect to the remaining portions of the internal arrangements, the Committee entertain the strongest opinion, both in reference to economy and despatch, that the committee-rooms and secondary apartments should be completed in the most simple and solid manner consistent with the character of the general building, but not involving any extraordinary expenditure.

"In respect to the deviations from the original plan, it has been satisfactory to learn that they have not been of a character to vary or affect the builder's contract; and that no future deviations are to be allowed, without the previous sanction and authority of the Commissioners of Woods and Forests.

"And the Committee have directed the minutes of evidence taken before them to be laid before your Lordships."

IMPROVEMENTS IN WESTMINSTER.

The Metropolitan Improvement Commissioners having decided on opening a direct communication from the new Houses of Parliament to the north-west district of London, various plans and estimates were sent in, the majority of which were rejected, in consideration of the large amount of compensation which would be demanded by the owners of household property in the respective localities. The line has, at length, been definitely marked out, and a contract concluded for two-thirds of the work. The new street will commence at the western extremity of the Houses of Parliament, running in an oblique line from Abingdon-street to Eaton-square, from which point there is already a corresponding continuation to the Great Western Road. By the formation of this street, two very desirable objects will be attained. It will afford a nearer and more convenient approach to the Houses of Parliament, the law courts, and the Government offices; whilst the removal of the numerous obscure streets, courts, and alleys, in that part of Westminster, will serve to abate a nuisance which has become so intolerable as to call for legislative reprehension. A great number of these dilapidated tenements have for several years been inhabited by persons of the very worst class; the property belongs chiefly to the dean and chapter, who are naturally anxious to break up this "den of thieves," and as the existing leases are nearly run out, the compensation demanded cannot be considerable; it is assumed, at least, that it will be no impediment to the prosecution of a scheme which promises an ample return for the capital invested, and which is still further commended by utility, convenience, and decency. The new street is to be of the same width as Regent-street, and will be of nearly equal length. Great part of the line, which passes through Pimlico, fronting Buckingham Palace stables, has been cleared already. In those streets which intersect the line through the other parts of Westminster, the workmen's operations are delayed only until the present occupants are expelled. Mr. Rigby Wason, late member for Ipswich, has contracted for two-thirds of the line, at a rate much below the Government surveyor's estimate. Connected with the above improvement another project has been revived with some prospect of ultimate adoption—namely, the erection of a bridge across the Thames, from the Horseferry-road to Lambeth-stairs, at the foot of Church-street, close to the Archiepiscopal Palace. This scheme was mooted nearly twenty years back; a prospectus was at that time issued, and a bill brought into Parliament with a view to the issue of shares for building a bridge by a joint-stock company. It met with so little support, that the Bill was rejected, and the project was consequently abandoned. However, it seems that it is now regarded with more favour; the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Marquis of Westminster having withdrawn their opposition, it is not improbable that the sanction of Parliament would now be obtained, should the application be renewed; more especially as a bridge at the point indicated would form an appropriate continuation of the new street, and facilitate communication between the northern and southern districts of the metropolis.—*Times*.

MONUMENT TO THE LATE EARL OF DURHAM.

The foundation-stone of the monument to be erected on Pensher-hill, in the county of Durham, to the memory of the late Earl of Durham, was laid on Wednesday, the 28th ult., with masonic honours, amidst an immense concourse of spectators, assembled from all parts of the adjoining district. Pensher-hill is the western extremity of a long range of lofty mountains, running, in a direction nearly east and west, from the sea-coast, a considerable distance into the county of Durham, and the elevation of it is such as to command an extensive view of the adjacent country. At the foot of this lofty mountain range the river Wear pursues its meandering course to the German Ocean, which is also visible from Pensher-hill. The locality of the monument is on the estate of the late Earl, in a neighbourhood full of romantic associations, and a more suitable spot for the erection of a monument to the late lamented Earl could not have been selected.

The proposed monument is already in a very forward state, the works having been in operation some months, so that the spectators could form a pretty accurate conception of what it will be when completed. The form approximates to that of the Temple of Theseus, with a rectangular basis of solid masonry 100 feet long by 54 feet in width. The foundation rests on the solid lime stone rock, 20 feet below the surface of the soil, and the base rises 10 feet above the platform of the hill. At the sides of this rectangle stand eighteen lofty open equidistant columns, 30 feet in height and 6½ feet in diameter, supporting at each end a magnificent pediment, and at each side a deep entablature, which will serve as a promenade when the building is complete. The promenade will be reached by spiral stairs to be formed within one of the pillars. From the ground to the upper point of the pediment will be about 70 feet. The structure stands nearly due east and west, and will form a prominent object to travellers on the line of the Great North of England Railway between Darlington and Newcastle, and will soon become a place of resort for parties of pleasure.

The stone for this magnificent edifice was presented to the building committee by the Marquis of Londonderry, and was obtained from his lordship's quarries at the village of New Pensher, distant about a mile from the top of the hill. The lime is from the Earl of Durham's kilns at Newbottle, about the same distance; and the sand from an excellent bed at the foot of the hill. The materials are conveyed up the hill by a temporary winding railway, the bed of which will form a permanent carriage drive when the building is complete. —*Times*.

TIMBER—ITS TREATMENT AND USES.

BY JAMES WYLSON.

(*Continued from p.* 428.)

75. Poona; otherwise Poon or Peon. This timber is superior to Mahogany and Riga Fir in the three primary requisites of strength, toughness, and stiffness; and it should, therefore, be well calculated for the heavier purposes of the house carpenter; it is employed in ship building, for decks, spars, &c. The appearance of the wood is that of a dusky mahogany, and it seems qualified for many of the uses to which that wood is usually applied; it is light and porous, but uniform in texture; the annual rings not very distinct, and there are no larger transverse septæ.

76. Plane.—The species generally known of this large and handsome description of tree, are the oriental and occidental; the former being a native of the East, and the latter of North America; although not indigenous to, they are both grown in Britain; the occidental being the more common of the two. Their introduction has been ascribed to Lord Chancellor Bacon, who certainly brought them first into notice at Verulam; but other writers fix the period at a year previous to the birth of that eminent statesman, and which took place in 1560. Though so beautiful a tree, and desirable as well for useful as ornamental purposes, it has not yet been cultivated in proportion to its merits.

77. The Oriental Plane is indigenous to Greece, in the earliest records of which it is mentioned; also to Persia, where from the pleasant shade which it diffuses, and trees generally being very uncommon, it is held in high estimation. It is one of those trees which attain the largest size, becoming lofty and wide-spreading, with massive trunk and crooked branches; these, with the variegation produced by the peeling off, in large patches, of its smooth grey bark, imparting a striking and picturesque effect; in stateliness and beauty it is second to no tree of the East. The leaves are wedge-formed at their base, palmate and cinque-lobed, lanceolate and sinuated in the divisions; but in the spring the blossom-balls appear before the foliage. The seeds ripen late in autumn, and should be sown immediately in the shade, and in a moist, healthy loam; in a rich alluvial plain, adjacent to a stream, they attain their greatest magnitude. The wood of young trees is of a yellowish white colour; that of a more advanced age browner, and streaked with reddish veins, somewhat resembling walnut, or rather beech, but more finely figured. An impression exists that it is deficient in hardiness, compared with the occidental; whilst in fact it is the hardier of the two; and though regarded here little better than in the light of fuel, in Greece and Persia it is employed in carpentry, doors, windows, furniture, and cabinet-work, and for which it is generally well calculated.

78. The Occidental Plane has been styled "the king of the western forests;" it is the largest tree of the American woods, rising in the most graceful forms, with vast spreading lateral branches, and covered with a bark of a brilliant white. In the Eastern states, it is called Button wood; in the western, Sycamore.*

* In the north of England the Sycamore or Great Maple is called the Plane tree.

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